MR. GILES' SPEECH

IN THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

ON THE

RESOLUTION OFFERED BY MR. HILLHOUSE

TO

REPEAL THE SEVERAL ACTS LAYING AN EMBARGO,

DECEMBER 2, 1808.

MR. PRESIDENT,

I SINCERELY regret, sir, to find myself driven again into this debate; whilst every feeling of my heart admonishes me to retirement. I sincerely wish to retire, not only from this debate, but from the political world. I am now acting only in obedience to a sense of duty. I shall, however, limit my remarks to as few objects as may be consistent with this obligation. They will principally relate to facts, which, in my judgment, have been incorrectly stated; and of course require correction. The first fact, to which I shall call the attention of the senate, is the one stated by the gentleman from Connecticut, [Mr. Hillhouse] and repeated by the gentleman from Massachusetts, [Mr. Pickering] that the non-importation act was an obstruction to an amicable adjustment with Great Britain. Both the gentlemen have stated that Great Britain would not treat with this rod suspended over her head; I assert, on the other hand, that she did treat with this rod suspended over her head, and that its suspension was continued at the request of the British commissioners. Now, sir, let us resort to the evidence. This will be found in the correspondence from Messrs. Monroe and Pinkney, to Mr. Madison. Speaking of

lord Holland, these gentlemen tell us, he said, "That in the mean time we could state to our government, what was unquestionably true, that those with whom we were treating were diligently and anxiously employed, in endeavours to devise an arrangement which should be convenient and honourable to us, and at the same time free from improper hazard to Great Britain; that it appeared to him that the actual pendency of the negotiations here, unless their sincerity were distrusted, as he was sure it would not be, would furnish an adequate motive to Congress, for merely postponing the commencement of a law which was originally a very strong measure, and would certainly, if allowed to go into operation at a moment when Great Britain was affording, in the face of the world, an unequivocal demonstration of her wish to remove every ground of misunderstanding between us, acquire a character of extreme harshness; that it was greatly to be lamented that the discussions in which we were now engaged, had not been sooner begun; but that knowing, as we did, to what cause the delay was to be ascribed, we knew also, that it was unavoidable."

"To these details we take the liberty to add our opinion, formed upon a careful view of the whole subject, that it would be proper upon the meeting of congress in December, to suspend the act for prohibiting the importation of certain articles of British manufacture, so as to afford farther time for the completion of the negotiations which it evidently presumes and which are now in train."

"The ground which congress have taken in this just and salutary measure, we are far from wishing to abandon; but to suspend and to abandon it are very different things. The last would wound deeply the honour of the nation, and prostrate the character of the government; but the first is in perfect conformity with the spirit and purpose of the law, and while it would furnish a signal proof of the equity and moderation of our public councils, would preserve unimpaired, that firm and dignified attitude which it becomes us at all times, but now especially, to maintain. The suspension will be so far from relinquishing the measure or weakening its effect, that it will distinctly imply a re-assertion of its principle and policy, and an unshaken resolution to act upon and enforce it, as soon as negotiation shall have been sufficiently and unsuccessfully tried."

Our ministers here state, that *a suspension of this act* was all that was required by the British commissioners. We also know, that the commissioners of both sides, did go on to negotiate, and that a treaty was concluded on, without its being once intimated, that this act formed the smallest obstruction to the negotiation; or had any influence in the smallest degree injurious to the provisions of the treaty. But, sir, I think this act facilitated and accelerated the negotiation. It will be recollected that before the passage of this act, every effort of our minister to negotiate had been either avoided or refused, and at the time of passing the law, the nego-

tation was itself entirely suspended.* After its passage you will find, by attending to the correspondence just read, every disposition was manifested by the British commissioners to accelerate the negotiations; and every pledge of sincerity on their part to that effect was given, to induce our government here, to suspend the law merely to give time for completing the negotiation. I cannot place my hand on the note of the British commissioners requesting the American ministers to furnish them with a copy of the act; but in that note, to the best of my recollection, may be seen the real cause of the anxiety of the British commissioners, for the further suspension of that act. It was the injurious effect the measure was calculated to have on the commerce of Great Britain, if it once should go into operation; and it was this they were anxious to prevent. This act appears to have been viewed by the British commissioners, precisely in the light in which it was seen here by the favourers of the measure. Its character and operation answered every expectation. It produced a treaty; and I regret, sir, that the provisions of the treaty were not such as to justify its ratification. I am aware the gentleman told us, that he paid but little respect to the representations of our ministers; but, sir, they ought certainly to be respected; or we ought to abandon the policy of having ministers at foreign courts. In this case, however, there was the less reason for disrespecting their communications, because they have been some time published; and neither disrespected nor contradicted by the British commissioners. In this case too, sir, it is not necessary to resort to this evidence exclusively in proof of this fact. It is proved by the note of the British commissioners, read by the gentleman himself. Let us review that note, and see what information it gives.

"*September* 4, 1806.

"On a full consideration of that act, we think it our duty to express our earnest hope and expectation, that some means may be found to suspend the execution of a measure so opposite, in its temper and tendency, to the disposition and views with which our pending negotiation has been commenced and is carrying on."

Here, sir, is a request merely *to suspend the execution of this act, &c.* which is the only rod that gentlemen complain so much of here, but which was no further complained of by the British commissioners. The true reason of their anxiety for this suspension I have before stated. Now, sir, how does this fact stand? Why, that the British commissioners did treat with this rod suspended over their heads; and so far from its having had any injurious influence on the negotiations, it probably had a beneficial one. The gentlemen then, are utterly mistaken in this fact. For, sir, whether it touched the pride or affected the sensibility of Great Britain or not, she unquestionably did treat with this same rod suspended over her head.

* *See note at the end.*

The next subject I shall mention is, the attempt to reproach the president for his instructions respecting the impressment of American seamen. This is an attempt, sir, which really excited my astonishment. Let us critically examine the circumstances, under which these instructions were given. The basis of our late negotiations at London, was laid in the senate. What did the senate say to the president upon the subject of the impressment of American seamen? Let me read a part of their resolution upon that subject: "and to enter into such arrangements with the British government, on this and all other differences subsisting between the two nations, (and particularly respecting the impressment of American seamen,) as may be consistent with the honour and interests of the United States, and manifest their earnest desire to obtain for themselves and their citizens by amicable negotiation, that justice to which they are entitled."

Here, sir, we find the senate, not content with intermingling the safety of our seamen with the other objects of the resolution, manifest a laudable solicitude upon this subject, by calling the president's attention to it in a special manner, "*and particularly respecting the impressment of American seamen*," say the senate, both these gentlemen voting in favour of the resolution: and now when instructions are given in strict conformity with this special injunction, the gentlemen come forward with the most indignant reproaches for this conduct. The ground of objection is stated to be, that the president instructed our ministers to insist, that the American flag should protect all persons sailing *in fact under its protection*; when the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Pickering] with an irrascibility of temper the most wonderful, tells us that the president *knew* that the British government would not accede to the proposition; and then ascribes to the president the unworthy motive of intending thereby to defeat the objects of the negotiation. It is necessary to restrain the feelings in replying to this groundless and unworthy insinuation. But, sir, I will tell the gentleman, that the president *knew* no such thing; that the gentleman himself *knew* no such thing, until the experiment was made. Indeed, there was one time, during the negotiation, when there was a great probability that it would succeed. But, sir, whether the proposition would succeed or not, the president, acting under the recommendation of the senate, and particularly of this very gentleman, was bound to make the experiment; especially, sir, when he offered the British commissioners to make their own terms for securing to themselves the service of their own seamen. But, sir, why not make the proposition? Is it because it is not our right? Is it because it is not just? No: that is not pretended: but because the president *knew* that the British government would not accede to the proposition, just or unjust. Now, sir, for one, I am not disposed to indulge the British government in this capricious

outrage upon our unquestionable rights. But, sir, the president was bound to make the experiment, and was bound never to admit the British pretension; if he thought *that* the only arrangement competent to the protection of American seamen from impressment. Yes, sir, and if the president had given no instructions upon this point, this same gentleman would have been as liberal in his reproaches as he now is; and they would have been much more merited. This singular freak of passionate invective is, to me, unaccountable. The gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. Hillhouse) gives me great credit for my candor, in ascribing the commercial prosperity of the United States to the British treaty. The gentleman is entirely mistaken in this statement. I admitted the fact of our commercial prosperity; but I ascribed it to its proper causes, to wit, the encouragements given to it by the government, and the enterprize and talents of our fellow citizens. I am willing to admit that the British treaty had not so baneful an effect upon society, as to have prevented this commercial prosperity; but it is the last cause to which, I think, it can properly be attributed. If however, sir, I had really been convinced, or supposed, that the British treaty had been instrumental in producing that effect, I should have no hesitation in admitting the fact, notwithstanding my opposition to it. I am very far from deeming my opinions infallible: I have often experienced their fallibility: and whenever I shall be convinced of an error, I shall feel no difficulty in avowing the conviction.

The next circumstance, to which I shall advert, is the extraordinary suggestion, that the embargo is intended to be made permanent. This is a most singular notion; and nothing but the respect I feel for the candor and sincerity of the gentlemen who suggest it, could induce me to believe that they are in earnest. I really before thought, Mr. President, it was merely what I should call an electioneering watch-word. I never expected that it could have had any operation beyond the electioneering ground. No, sir, the embargo is not intended to be permanent. But, sir, let us wait a little while, before we make ourselves bloody in the wars of Europe. Let us have a little patience, a little self-denial. I am as much opposed to a permanent embargo as either of the gentlemen from Massachusetts or Connecticut: I think the idea perfectly absurd. I am as ready to fight for the *birthright* of the ocean as either of the gentlemen. But, sir, I never will consent to raise the embargo, until some measures shall be substituted, better calculated to assert and maintain our national rights and national independence; measures of more activity and more energy. I am not certain, sir, that this is not the time for their adoption; but, sir, no great mischief can arise from waiting a little longer; waiting events in Europe, now in a state of rapid succession.

The next fact suggested, which I shall notice, is, that the embargo has arrested and destroyed commerce. I think very dif-

ferently : I think it has been, and still is, a shield interposed for the protection of commerce. French edicts and British orders would have destroyed commerce ; but the embargo, I hope, has saved it. It is very easy to say that the embargo destroyed commerce ; because it was the act immediately preceding its suspension, and is easily resorted to as the proximate cause : but there is such a thing as an original or primitive cause : this was the French edicts and British orders. These would have *caused* its entire destruction ; but they *caused* the embargo, which *caused* the suspension of commerce, and has, I hope, shielded it from destruction.

The gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Pickering] has taken great pains to shew that the orders of council had no influence in producing the embargo laws. I think this circumstance of no sort of consequence to the community, but the gentleman seems to think it is of the last importance to himself individually. It probably is ; I suppose he stands committed to the public upon that fact. I was not present at the time of passing the first embargo law ; but the gentleman's labor has perfectly convinced me, that he is utterly mistaken in the fact. Let me critically examine the gentleman's evidence. First, he says, that the orders are not mentioned in the president's message ; and secondly, that the secretary of state refers Mr. Pinkney to the president's message for the causes of the embargo laws. I have examined the president's message, and think it perfectly correct, the gentleman's angry invectives to the contrary notwithstanding. I do not believe the gentleman could now frame as good a one, after all the lights, which time and a farther disclosure of events have shed upon the subject. Permit me now, Mr. President, to call your attention in a particular manner to the contents of this message. "The communications now made, shewing the great and increasing dangers, with which our vessels, our seamen and merchandise, are threatened on the high seas and elsewhere from the *belligerent powers of Europe*, and it being of the greatest importance to keep in safety these essential resources, &c. &c." Now sir, what were the communications accompanying this message ? The correspondence between Mr. Armstrong and Mr. Champagny, shewing that the Berlin decree was in a state of execution, which had before been suspended in its operation in relation to the United States. But, says the gentleman, no papers were communicated respecting these orders of council, and therefore the gentleman infers that no apprehensions existed, which could influence this transaction. I draw a very different inference from the message itself. I presume the communication of this hostile act of France, so immediately after it was known to the executive, and avoiding a direct reference to the apprehended hostility of Great Britain, could not be conceived to be an act of favoritism towards France. That some hostile act from Great Britain was in contemplation, is most evident from the message itself. From what quarters does the message say that great and increasing dangers are

threatened to our vessels, our seamen and merchandise? *From the belligerents of Europe.* Here is no exception. The belligerents of Europe, mean *all the belligerents.* If the president conceived there were no dangers threatened from any other quarter than France, he would have used the term *France;* not the *belligerents of Europe.* But why communicate the evidence of his apprehensions from France, and not from Great Britain, if he entertained any? Why, sir, for the most obvious reason imaginable; because the information from France was official. The information from Great Britain was not. It was contained in newspapers only, which were in the hands of every gentleman; and their contents every gentleman could appreciate, as well as the president. Now, sir, under these circumstances, was not the message of the president perfectly correct? Let me ask the gentleman, if he can now mend it? If, sir, the president in his message, had communicated this newspaper information, respecting the apprehended hostility of the British government, what a glorious theme of invective would have been afforded the gentleman, of favoritism to France and hostility against Great Britain? The omission, however, to do this, could not screen the president from the same angry reproaches. If the gentleman will impartially review all these circumstances, and then turn his eyes towards his own heart, he will find that the errors he has so uncharitably ascribed to the president, will be found in his own unhappy, ungovernable passions. But, sir, this is not all. I will now refer the gentleman to some evidence to shew the incorrectness of the assertion he has made; evidence which he cannot deny, because it comes from his own words, and was attended with such circumstances in the face of this senate, that it cannot be mistaken. In the gentleman's passionate zeal yesterday, he told us, that no time was allowed in the senate for the discussion of the original embargo law; but that it was discussed in the house of representatives; and the principal arguments urged there in favor of the measure were drawn from the hostile acts of Great Britain. The gentleman said, that it was urged in that house that the measure would starve Great Britain; that it would bring her to our feet, &c. &c. Now, sir, why these arguments in that house, if there were no apprehended acts of hostility from Great Britain? They would have been strange arguments, if the only hostile acts inducing the measure, were the hostile acts of France, not of Great Britain.

[Mr. Pickering rose to explain; he said he mentioned these circumstances yesterday, to shew the effects expected from the measure by the friends of it; in which they had been mistaken. He did not speak of them, as inducements to the measure.]

I readily admit that the gentleman, at the time of making these observations, was intirely insensible of their irresistable operation in establishing a fact, which he thinks so important to himself to disprove; and in my judgment, sir, they do unquestionably prove that these British orders, or the apprehensions of them, stood in the front of the inducements to the original embar-

go law. Sir, were not these arguments in the house of representatives immediate results from these inducements? And what was the actual state of the facts? Why, sir, that although the orders were not received in such an official form as to justify their communication by the president; the intention to issue them was announced in the newspapers with so many marks of probability, as justly to excite apprehensions in the government for the safety of our seamen and commerce, and to justify the measure for the protection of both. It has been proved, not only that this information was published in newspapers before the passage of the act in the senate; but the gentleman will recollect, that it did not pass the house of representatives for two or three days after it had passed the senate: it was therefore very natural, that the longer these apprehensions were felt, the stronger would be the inducements to the measure deduced from them; and hence the character of the discussions in that house described by the gentleman. But the gentleman seems to think, that appresensions are not correct grounds for legislation. In ordinary cases it is admitted; but this was an extraordinary case. The measure was precautionary, and if these apprehensions had not been realized, it would at any time have been in the power of the government to dispense with the precaution; whereas if congress had waited for a formal authentication of the orders, their intended object would have been answered, and the precautionary measure rendered unnecessary. But, sir, I think this explanation of very little consequence to the nation. It can be of little consequence to ascertain whether the adoption of the embargo was a lucky hit or a dictate of wisdom; and I should not have taken the trouble of this examination, if the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Pickering] had not availed himself of this occasion, to assail the reputation of his late colleague [Mr. Adams]; a gentleman who represented the state of Massachusetts with so much honor to himself, and advantage to the state, and the nation; upon a point too, in which the gentleman here present, has put himself so clearly in the wrong from his own shewing. I had hoped, Mr. President, that the gentleman would have so far restrained his feelings, as to have permitted this gentleman's retirement to have shielded him from these unmerited reproaches; but it now seems that no delicacy of situation can procure an exemption from the inveteracy of the gentleman's passions. This cruel attack has imposed upon me an indispensible obligation to defend this absent gentleman; and it has been principally this circumstance, which has driven me again most reluctantly into this debate. Sir, I can attest, and now do attest with great pleasure, the disinterestedness and purity of the motives which dictated that gentleman's [Mr. Adams] late political conduct. As to its wisdom, that is matter of opinion, and now in a course of experiment; but as to his exemption from all views of personal promotion, or aggrandizement, I here assert that fact, upon my own knowledge and upon my own responsibility, as far as can be

warranted by the most explicit and unequivocal assurances from the gentleman himself; given too under circumstances which render their sincerity unquestionable. It gives me great pleasure to defend this absent gentleman, not only on account of his innocence of these reproaches, but on account of his merits, his virtues and his talents, which, in my judgment, place him on so high a ground, as not to induce a wish, on his part, to shrink from any comparison with either of the five worthies of Massachusetts, of whom we have been informed by the gentleman [Mr. Pickering.]

Permit me now, sir, to proceed with the discussion. The gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Pickering] proceeds to tell us, that Mr. Rose was sent here as a messenger of peace; that he brought the olive branch in his hand, but that it was designedly refused by the administration, and of course a subject of serious reproach and lamentation. Sir, I do not know what Mr. Rose brought in his hand; he never would tell the government what he brought. But let me ask the gentleman, what he left behind him? The gentleman has furnished me with an apposite figure. He left behind him, a rod in pickle for us. He left behind him these very orders of council, which were designedly concealed from him, although they had been long deliberated upon, and were matured before he left London; and were actually issued almost as soon as he lost sight of the land. If, therefore, he brought in his hand the olive branch, he certainly left concealed behind him the scourge of our commerce. Yes, sir, it was the besom which was intended to sweep, and would have swept our commerce from the face of the ocean. And the gentleman tells us in a tone of lamentation, that when Mr. Rose arrived here he was met by the embargo. Yes, sir, the judicious vigilance of the government had saved our commerce from the destructive influence of these concealed orders of council. Could you have supposed, Mr. President, that this would have been a subject of lamentation to any American citizen? Could you have supposed, sir, that it could have been made the subject of reproach against the administration? Could you have supposed, sir, that the most jaundiced passions could have deluded any American citizen so far, as to commit himself upon such a charge? Sir, we differ so much in our facts, that it would be more wonderful if we should agree, than differ, in our conclusions. Is there a gentleman here, sir, prepared to say, that this is not a correct statement of facts? And if it is, what is the result? Why, simply, that Great Britain had, in the most insidious manner, issued orders for the entire destruction of our commerce; and that our government had completely disappointed their iniquitous object, by interposing the embargo for its protection.

But, sir, the gentleman, not content with the profusion of his invectives against the administration collectively, and the absent gentleman, whom I have defended with great pleasure, has directed his bitterest resentments against the secretary of state, individually:

He, sir, has ventured to accuse the secretary of insincerity in his diplomatic correspondence. Permit me to tell that gentleman, that the secretary of state is incapable of an act of insincerity, either as a man or a politician. The gentleman himself, sir, has been secretary of state; and even in the phrensy of his passions, it is wonderful to me he did not see, that he was forcing himself into a most disadvantageous comparison. I think the instances of insincerity he has quoted partake nothing of that character. I think them perfectly proper, the gentleman's angry criticisms to the contrary notwithstanding. Let us attend particularly to the instances quoted. The first is, that the secretary had told the British minister, that the Berlin decree, so far as it professed to place all the British Isles in a state of blockade, was an empty menace. Now let me ask the gentleman if that was not, and is not, the fact? I believe that no gentleman is more strongly impressed with the truth of this fact, nor rejoices more in its truth, than the gentleman himself: But the gentleman infers, if this decree was a mere empty menace, as it respects the blockading the whole British Isles, it could not furnish any inducement to the measure of the embargo. I differ entirely with the gentleman in his inference. The Berlin decree, after it was put into a state of execution against the United States, would operate very differently upon the defenceless American commerce spread along the French coast, from its operation as forming the blockade of the British Isles; and therefore would be, as it in fact was, an empty menace in that case; whilst it would have a most serious effect in the other; and would certainly furnish a just inducement to the government for the protection of the exposed commerce of the United States. Here then, sir, I see a perfectly correct sentiment without any mark of insincerity upon it.

But, sir, the gentleman has brought into view another act of insincerity. Let that be also examined. The gentleman complains, that our ministers in London were instructed to tell the British minister only of the precautionary object of the embargo laws; and of course leave their coercive object to be inferred by the British minister. This was both polite and proper. It was an instruction to our ministers in fact, to avoid touching the sensibility of the British minister and nation. What would the gentleman have done himself, sir? Would he, because there were two objects in passing the law, have instructed our ministers to have pressed both upon the British commissioners, although one of them would have touched their national pride, and sensibility? This was unnecessary, and would not have been very urbane. It would have been an outrage upon every principle of diplomatic delicacy. I cannot therefore see the ground of objection to this instruction, unless it is, that the secretary of state has not taken the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Pickering] for his model; that he had not resorted to some of the gentleman's bold meta-

phorical flourishes ; that he did not instruct our ministers to tell the British, " that the tiger crouches before he leaps upon his prey." Yes, sir, I am extremely happy to behold the striking contrast exhibited between the former, and present secretary of state ; a contrast so highly honorable to the present secretary. Indeed, sir, I am the more astonished at the gentleman's driving us into this comparison, so unfortunate to himself, when he must know, or certainly ought to know, that his own inveterate passions utterly incapacitated him from the discharge of the duties of that office, and finally expelled him from it. The gentleman seems to be still harping upon the miserable tale of French influence. I suppose he also, unfortunately stands committed upon that idle suggestion. Sir, insinuations of this nature are degrading to the national character ; and I always feel a condescension in being compelled to make a reply. Indeed, sir, it is necessary to impose strong restraints upon the feelings in making the reply the suggestion deserves.

But, sir, the gentleman, so intent, I suppose, upon his own self-justification, that he has manifested great labor and ingenuity in making a collection of scraps from the numerous documents before us ; from which he has attempted to infer, not only that the executive department was acting under French influence, but that this honorable body was also acting under the same influence.... yes, sir, the body of which the gentleman himself is a member. Yet, sir, the gentleman knows, notwithstanding his jealousies, his surmises, and his inferences, that it is impossible ; that the fact is not so. Let me ask that gentleman, if he is prepared to say in his place, that any one member of this body, or that this body itself, is acting under French influence, or any improper influence ? The gentleman must have too much respect for himself to make such an unfounded assertion. Why then, sir, all this labor at surmise, suspicion, and inference ? I leave the gentleman to answer this question. Equally unfounded are the miserable intimations towards the executive.

Let me ask the gentleman, through what channel his unhappy, suspicious mind has taught him to suppose, that these dark, these invisible negotiations could be carried on ? I suppose he would necessarily reply through Mr. Armstrong, our minister in Paris. Yet Mr. Armstrong has lately retrieved himself entirely from the gentleman's delusive suspicions. We are now told, Mr. Armstrong is a patriot ; follow his advice. Again, sir, let me ask the gentleman, if he has heard any apology for the hostile conduct of France, either in this house, or any where else ? Has not every person declared, that the conduct was hostility itself ? Mr. President, whether the gentleman intended to make insinuations, or inferences, or surmises, or suspicions, or assertions, if he pleases, of French influence, as operating either upon the executive, or upon this body, I here in my place do pronounce the whole to be utterly

unfounded. But, sir, the gentleman boldly says, there is something concealed. I really should like to know what it is that he supposes can be concealed: I should really like to know, what witchcraft it is that has continually tortured the gentleman's mind with these unhappy, fantastic delusions. No, sir, there is nothing concealed: there is too much exposed; for, sir, in the present whirlpool of inordinate passions, all honorable confidence seems to be disrepected. I will not accuse this gentleman of acting under British influence:* I feel too much respect for the American character to do so. I hope and trust he is not. I am willing to admit that his views are American But, sir, this consideration will not deter me from expressing my wonder and astonishment at the extraordinary views that the gentleman takes of American interests; first, in the unremitting labor he has taken to put his own government in the wrong upon every point of discussion between it and the British government; and in his strange misrepresentation or total disregard of facts; of outrages, sir, upon our dearest rights, by the British government; outrages which ought to rouse every American feeling into action. Secondly, in the comparative view he has taken of the hostile acts of France and Great Britain. Sir, he has used every effort to magnify, if possible, French aggressions; whilst he has faintly admitted British aggressions, and even palliated or excused them. Let us now see, sir, what is the true character of aggressions which are treated with so much tenderness? Sir, I said the other day, and I have not heard it contradicted, and I say again to-day, that the British government seizes and confiscates our vessels engaged in a lawful trade: that she has attempted, by an act of parliament, to colonize and tax us: that she has, in the same manner, undertaken to exercise acts of national sovereignty solemnly given by the people to congress: that she has undertaken to exercise an act of legislation over the people of the United States refused to congress, and retained to themselves in their highest sovereign capacity. Are these facts denied? No, sir: if true, let me ask the gentleman, what can be worse? what can be more injurious to our interests, or derogatory to our national character? what can the French do, that is worse than this? Nothing, sir: these acts form the climax of outrages. But, sir, the gentleman tells us, that the French emperor has said, there shall be no neutrals. I do not know whether he has used that identical expression or not. I believe it is not the expression in the paper to which the gentleman alludes. But, sir, suppose it is: what then? Is the gentleman so ready to obey the mandate of the French emperor, as to take part in the war, because he orders him to do so? I did not think the gentleman would take the yoke so quietly. In effect, both Great Britain and France have said, there shall be no neutrals; and I care nothing for the form of expression. The first declaration to that effect, which I have seen, is contained in the polite note of lords Holland and Auckland, at-

* *See note at the end.*

tached to the late unratified treaty. The language in effect is, if you do not make war on France, we will reserve to ourselves the right to make war on you, according to this treaty of *amity* and *commerce*. But, sir, because these two great belligerents command us to take part in their wars, are we bound to obey their cruel mandates? Are we to abandon the right of judging of our own interests and policy? I am disposed to think they will ultimately drive us into their wars; but let us keep out of them as long as we think our own interests and policy require the recession.

The gentleman from Connecticut [Mr. Hillhouse] has attempted to place our situation in a ludicrous point of view; he asks how are we to fight at triangles? Are we to fight France and Great Britain at the same time? Why, sir, this is the very circumstance which increases our embarrassments. It is a situation perfectly novel and unexampled; and distinguishes it from all the cases put by the gentleman as analogous to it. At every other time we have had but one adversary; if we had but one at this time, there would be no difficulty in the choice of measures; but having two at the same time, and both so formidable, presents an unexampled difficulty in the choice of measures; and is the strongest argument imaginable in favor of the position we have assumed. This, sir, is made more evident by the gentleman's illustration. The gentleman says, if two men were to attack him at the same time, would he avoid the combat until he could get one by himself? I presume he would, if he were a man of prudence; especially if either of them were a full match for him; and he knew the moment he set on one, the other would set on him, and tear him to pieces. I think under such circumstances, a dignified retirement would be at least as honorable as being tumbled in the dust; and would certainly be more the dictate of prudence and wisdom. It therefore appears to me, that the gentleman's illustration is an extremely happy one, to justify the position assumed by the United States, under the peculiarity of their difficulties.

The gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Lloyd], I presume with a view of shewing, that our supply of provisions can be of little consequence to Great Britain, has favored us with a statement of her annual consumption of grain, and our annual exports. The annual consumption of Great Britain he states at one hundred and fifty millions of bushels, and our whole exports at seven millions. I am willing to take his estimate, although our whole exports are probably much more. From this statement, the gentleman seems to infer, that this small supply can be of but little consequence in a market requiring this enormous consumption. I draw a very different inference from these data given by the gentleman: and I am the more disposed to examine this point, as I have often heard the same inferences drawn by others. According to this statement, if Great Britain should raise barely enough for her own consumption, except seven millions of bushels, and it is probable she

will not exceed this product the present year, she would want a supply for her whole population for above a fortnight in the year. This would be a serious deficiency : and to appreciate my argument, the gentleman should first make the experiment of starving a fortnight ; and I think, before the expiration of that time, he would be willing to admit there was some force at least in my argument. It would be the same case with a nation, if the scarcity operated equally, and upon every individual in the nation, at the same time. But that is not the way in which a scarcity does operate. It operates by raising the prices of grain, and thus excluding those from the use of it, who have no money to buy. In the event of a scarcity in Great Britain, Mr. Canning would probably not have a dish less to his table on that account ; whilst the poor would suffer for the want of bread. As the scarcity increased, the greater would be the numbers excluded from the use of bread ; and the stock in the nation would be exclusively consumed by those who had the means of purchasing a proportion of it. This would be the course of things as long as the order of society could be maintained, and the suffering poor compelled to bear their hard fate. But, sir, if this quantity of provisions should be wanted in Great Britain this year, and it cannot be obtained any where, but from the United States ; and if the want of it should drive the prices very high, and bear of course with great severity upon the suffering poor ; would not these circumstances alone furnish strong inducements to Great Britain to relax her orders, and to do us justice ? To do us justice, did I say, sir ? No, sir, to do us half justice : we do not require more than half justice at her hands.

If the suffering poor could be apprized that the deficit of provisions could be made up by opening an intercourse with the United States, and that this depended upon the pleasure of the British cabinet, would there not be strong representations to them, to relieve the suffering poor, when nothing but an act of half justice, would be necessary to effect the object ? Under such a state of things, the cabinet could not withstand the representations of the people. May we not hope then, sir, if this should be the state of things in Great Britain during the present year, that these appeals to her interest will not be unavailing ? But, sir, I am ready to admit, that I derive the less consolation from this hope, from the apprehension that if even a relaxation of these orders should take place in consequence of any coerced state of things in Great Britain, the relaxation would be but temporary ; and the moment the pressure ceased, the hostile measures would be resumed. Since Great Britain has become intoxicated with this extraordinary project of recolonization, I verily believe, we shall again have to fight her out of it ; and I am inclined to think, that now is as good a time for the contest, as we can expect in any future time. But, sir, we are told, that this subject has a commercial as well as a political bearing : the commercial must certainly be a subordinate

one. Let me, however, bestow a few thoughts on its commercial bearings. I mean no disrespect to merchants; but upon this subject I do not think their statements ought to be confided in. I am sure they will excuse the observation, when I tell them, that I was taught this lesson at the time of laying the former embargo, by one of the most respectable merchants in the United States; and then a representative in Congress from the city of Philadelphia. That gentleman then told us, that upon the question of an embargo, the information of merchants was not to be relied upon; that without imputing to them any improper motive, their statements would necessarily partake of their calculations of their own particular interests.

The gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Pickering] has favored us with mercantile information from the insurance offices at Boston and Salem; as well as information from some of his respectable mercantile correspondents. I am willing to respect this species of information as far as it extends and merits attention; but, sir, it does not contain all the information I want; and as little as I know of mercantile principles, I know that it is essentially erroneous. Sir, the information from the insurance offices does not extend to all the objects it ought to embrace. I want to know in the first place, sir, if we repeal the embargo laws, without any substitute, and agree to trade under the British orders in council; what would be the premium of insurance upon our national character, and national independence? This important article of barter seems to have escaped the attention of the offices altogether; whereas it appears to me to be the previous question. All others sink into insignificance before it. Sir, cent per cent. would not insure them. The policy must be made upon a calculation of a total loss. The insurance could not be done upon *these essential articles of barter*, in all the insurance offices in the United States. Now, sir, as these are articles which I hold with others in trust, I can never violate the sacred deposit, or put it at risk, until I deem the policy perfectly competent to cover the loss. Again, sir, I wish to know the premium against the British orders in council, upon a voyage to France, or any where else, where an American vessel may go under the protection of the laws of nations. Cent per cent. would not insure in the exercise of this right; and for one I would rather fight for it, than abandon it. Again, sir, what would be the insurance against French captures to European ports, in case the embargo were raised? It would be difficult to make a calculation, until some experiments should be made. The reason of the low insurance now, is, that the French have no inducements to send out privateers, to depredate upon our commerce, as long as the embargo restrains it within our ports: raise the embargo, and the temptation to plunder would fill the ocean with privateers. The commerce would stand little chance to escape the plunderers. These observations are sufficient to shew, first, that the informa-

tion from the insurance offices does not embrace all the articles of barter we have in the market: particularly those of the *first necessity*. Secondly, that the policies upon most of the articles embraced by it, are calculated upon incorrect principles, and not adjusted to the state of things which would exist upon raising the embargo without a substitute. Further, sir, with my little knowledge of commercial details, I will venture, without the fear of contradiction, to question the accuracy of the information furnished by the gentleman's respectable commercial correspondent [Mr. Thorndike]. I am willing to admit, sir, that he is, as the gentleman describes him to be, a merchant of the first respectability; and as such I respect him; but I cannot, in all points, subscribe to his mercantile information. I will mention only two points in which he is evidently mistaken, and they will be important enough to vary the whole aspect of the calculation he has made, as to what trade we could carry on under the orders in council. First, he has made a calculation of our trade to Great Britain upon the usual prices of American articles in British markets. This is an extremely incorrect standard of prices; because, if all American articles were driven into the British market, and excluded from the markets where they are consumed, they would bear no price at all. They would not defray expenses. Take the article of tobacco for instance. The United States export upon an average 75,000 hogsheads; of which Great Britain consumes 14,000. The rest are exported to the European continent. What would be the price of an article, when there is five times as much at market as is wanted for consumption, or for any other use? The merchants examined before the house of commons unanimously agree, that this article would not defray expenses. They have not only sworn to this fact, but I would ask, if it is not the dictate of common sense, and the common result of every principle of barter? The same remark would apply to cotton and rice, and other American articles; but perhaps not in the same degree. As to cotton, I am perfectly convinced, from the immense, and increasing quantities of that article, raised in the United States, the only way to keep up its price, is to keep open all the markets in the world where it is consumed. The gentleman also includes in his estimate, exports to the French West India islands. They are now in a state of strict blockade, and of course the whole of this item ought to be expunged. There are probably other material errors; but these of themselves are sufficient to vary the whole aspect and bearing of his calculation. Indeed, sir, I am of opinion, that little or no commerce could be carried on under the conflicting orders and decrees. All these calculations are made upon the assumed principle, that the rules prescribed in these hostile decrees and orders would be invariably adhered to in their practical operations. I intertain a very different opinion. The commerce which might strictly be permitted by the orders and

decrees, would be subjected to so many vexations by the ignorance or artifices of the commanders of the hostile armed ships, as to render all the remaining commerce dangerous and unprofitable; and I am perfectly satisfied, after incurring the disgrace of submitting to these arrogant and unwarrantable impositions, we should, covered over with disgrace, be compelled to fight for the miserable pittance of commerce, apparently held out to us by these hostile and conflicting orders and edicts. This miserable and disgraceful commerce, affords no allurement to me; and it will disappoint all those who have made these delusive calculations upon it. The gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Pickering] in a great degree unravelled the mystery, which was before suspended over the calculations of his mercantile friend, by telling us, that this friend had at this time several vessels laden with southern productions, ready to set sail the moment the embargo shall be raised. This circumstance, without any imputation upon the motives of the gentleman, may be fairly conceived to have had some bearing upon his calculations, and is a case in point to prove the correctness of the information derived from the gentleman of Philadelphia, on a former and similar occasion

Before I sit down, Mr. President, permit me to explain some expressions which fell from me in debate a few days since, and which seem to have roused into action the indignant feelings of the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. Pickering.] The gentleman might have saved himself these painful feelings, if he had been more attentive to my observations. He supposes, that I called his federal friends in Massachusetts, political demagogues Now, sir, those gentlemen were not particularly alluded to, either in words or intentions. I made an observation in very general terms upon the structure of popular governments. I stated, as an inconvenient circumstance in the operations of such governments, that when the union and energy of the people were most required to resist foreign aggressions, the pressure of these very aggressions would present temptations to political demagogues, to separate the people from their own government, and through the people's discontents, to find their way to office and to power. I applied this observation to the present and all future times. I then gave the late and present proceedings, under the pressure of the embargo laws, in evidence to prove the correctness of the remark. I made no particular application of it to any description of gentlemen, nor to any particular part of the United States, nor was it intended to be so applied; it was intended to be general in its application to every part of the union. The gentleman himself has made the application to his friends; and I readily admit, without reminding him of the old adage, that he is better informed than I am, whether his own application suits his own friends. But, sir, I did not particularly allude to these gentlemen. I feel the same respect for the gentlemen of Massachusetts, that I do for those of any other part of

the union. Nor have I any difficulty in saying, that a difference in political opinions is no ground of personal disrespect; and that I do not now, and never have made it one. On the contrary, I am willing to proclaim it to all the world, that I know many federal gentlemen for whom I feel great personal respect. I regret also, Mr. President, that some of the observations which fell from me the other day, have made so strong impressions upon the feelings of the gentleman from Connecticut, [Mr. Hillhouse] for whom I do feel a high personal respect. Upon reviewing some of them, I fear they were calculated to have too strong a bearing upon that gentleman's feelings; but, sir, it will be recollected, that to his observations I was principally replying, and therefore, that my remarks had apparently a stronger application towards him personally, than in fact they were intended to have. It will also be recollected, that most of the remarks of this nature, were directed against the repeal of the embargo laws without any substitute, and which, in my judgment, would have been submission to foreign aggressions. Since the gentleman has disclaimed all ideas of submission, and has come forward in the true spirit of '76, I am as ready as any gentleman, to do honour to his patriotism. Mr. President, we have now made a fair comparison of opinion and information upon the measures heretofore adopted by the government. Gentlemen have been indulged with a full retrospect of these measures; may we not hope, that we are better prepared to see what measures are now proper to be adopted to save the nation from surrounding dangers? Sir, if we could prevail upon ourselves to act under the scriptural injunction; if we could first employ ourselves in taking the motes out of our own eyes, instead of being so busy in taking them out of the eyes of our neighbours, is it not reasonable to expect, that we should see more clearly the course of conduct most proper to be adopted for the people's interest and the general welfare? If we could seriously turn our eyes in upon our own hearts, and impartially examine our own passions, might we not expect to find there, some of the errors which we delusively ascribe to others? Is it not to be feared, that this is the real source of our disunion? and is it not greatly to be regretted, sir, that union can not be obtained, when it is all that is wanted to ensure us complete success against our unjust adversaries? Let us, then, sir, with a magnanimity becoming ourselves and our stations, banish all personal animosities; let us act like brethren of one family united in interest, united in honour, united in affection. A knowledge of this circumstance alone, might probably secure justice from our adversaries without striking a blow. But, sir, if unfortunately we should be compelled to engage in the bloody scene, how indispensable is it, that we should be able to exert the whole energy of an undivided nation?

NOTES.

French influence.. .What are the means of French influence in this country? None: the idea is absurd.

British influence....What are the means of British influence in this country? The following amongst others:

Language, jurisprudence, law books, literature; tories, and the descendants of tory families; blood connections, intermarriages; mercantile capital, mercantile partnerships; newspapers, &c. &c. &c These influences are interwoven into society, and if we mean to preserve our independence, demand the most watchful vigilance of the politician.

Extract of a letter from Mr. Monroe to Mr. Madison, dated,
"LONDON, May 17, 1806.

"After my interview with Mr. Fox, on the 25th ult. I waited a fortnight without hearing from him. This new instance of delay surprized me, because he had shewn a sensibility to the former one, and did not seem aware of the necessity of adding to it. Independent of the general object, the war with Prussia, and the blockades incident to it; the doctrine and practice respecting which it was necessary to arrange, furnished a new motive for a communication with him. On mature reflection, I thought it best to call informally, which I did on the 11th, with a view to enter on these topics in the familiar manner I had heretofore done. Mr. Fox was at the office, but did not receive me. He sent the expression of his regret at not being able to do it, being, as he said, just going to attend the cabinet, who were waiting for him. I called again on the 13th, and experienced the same result, though I had left word that I should then be there. I was informed by his desire, that a summons from the king, to attend him at the palace, prevented his receiving me on that day. I met him on the 15th at the drawing room, but had no opportunity of speaking to him. Sir Francis Vincent, the first under secretary of state, being acquainted with my desire, promised to arrange with him an interview, and to inform me of it. These are the only circumstances worthy notice that have occurred here since my last, till to-day. I mention them that you may be better enabled to judge correctly, in all respects, of the light in which the incident of this day ought to be viewed."

Extract of a letter from Mr. Monroe to Mr. Madison, dated,
"LONDON, May 20, 1806.

"With respect to the delay to which I am exposed, it is utterly out of my power to explain to you the cause. I have no reason to change the opinion which I have heretofore expressed of Mr.

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Fox's disposition on the subject, though I have had no late communication with him. His present reserve is unfavourable, but it may be otherwise accounted for, and on principles which are quite natural, and therefore presumable. He may have experienced more difficulties in the cabinet than he had expected. Many of the members may be indisposed to an arrangement on such terms as can be accepted, and most of them willing to postpone any decision, until the result of the proceedings in congress is known. Under these circumstances he may find it most eligible to avoid any further communication with me for the present.

"It becomes, therefore, very difficult, if not altogether improper, for me to press the business at this time. It seems to be my duty to postpone such pressure to the same epoch, that is, till the final proceedings of congress are known. I shall doubtless receive with them the instructions of the president on the whole subject, which I beg to assure you, I shall use my utmost exertions to carry into effect."

☞ The foregoing observations in reply to Mr. Pickering, refer to two speeches delivered by that gentleman, one of which only has yet appeared in print.